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Programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Addendum

Tenth report: Relationship between the treatment of perennial activities in the programme budget and the use of the contingency fund

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on the relationship between the treatment of perennial activities in the programme budget and the use of the contingency fund (A/C.5/52/42). In the course of its deliberations, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General who provided additional information on the issues under consideration.

2. The Advisory Committee points out that resources appropriated by the General Assembly for perennial activities are subject to the approval of their respective mandates and may not be expended unless and until such mandates are approved or renewed.

3. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that, in the past, programme budgets included a number of perennial activities related to Namibia, Kampuchea and apartheid. The programme budget for the current biennium includes, besides the Commission on Human Rights, the activities of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and its subsidiary bodies which are also approved annually by the General Assembly (see para. 2.97 of section 2 of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999).

4. The Committee believes that problems in the interpretation of what is a perennial mandate should be settled by the General Assembly. The Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly take note of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/C.5/52/42.

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Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Addendum

Eleventh report: Standards of accommodation for air travel

1. The Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions has considered the report of the Secretary-General on standards of accommodation for air travel, covering the period from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998 (A/53/498). The Committee also had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the same subject, covering the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997 (A/52/517).

2. The reports of the Secretary-General were submitted pursuant to General Assembly decisions 44/442 of 21 December 1989 and 46/450 of 20 December 1991, in which the Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to continue to submit annual reports on standards of accommodation for air travel. The reports also contain information on all expenditure by the United Nations for first-class air travel and on the meetings attended by eminent persons for whom exceptions have been made for first-class air travel, as requested by the General Assembly in its decision 40/455 of 18 December 1985 and section XIII of its resolution 45/248 A of 21 December 1990.

3. As indicated in the reports of the Secretary-General, the General Assembly, in its resolution 42/214 of 21 December 1987, *inter alia*, authorized the Secretary-General to exercise his discretion in making exceptions to allow first-class travel on a case-by-case basis. In accordance with administrative instruction ST/AI/249/Rev.3 of 29 March 1989, business-class air travel may also, in certain circumstances, be authorized by the Secretary-General.

4. During the period from 1 July 1996 to 30 June 1997, the Secretary-General authorized 25 cases of first-class travel and 23 cases of business-class travel as an exception to the standards of accommodation; the total additional costs incurred as a result of those exceptions amounted to $54,303 (see A/52/517). For the period from 1 July 1997 to 30 June 1998, as indicated in document A/53/498, the Secretary-General authorized 24 cases of first-class air travel and 31 cases of business-class travel as an exception to the standards of accommodation, with a related additional expenditure of $81,837.

5. As can be seen from the information contained in table 1 below, which was provided to the Committee, in the past three bienniums there have been fewer exceptions for air travel and the related costs have been lower than in previous years. Table 2 below provides information on the number of cases approved or declined during the periods 1996–1997 and 1997–1998, and reflects the different categories for which exceptions were requested. The Advisory Committee requests that in future reports of the Secretary-General in which exceptions for first-class air travel by officials or eminent persons have been approved, the nature of the event being attended by the official or eminent person should be more clearly specified.

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Table 1
Exceptions for air travel, 1989–1998

	Number of exceptions		*Additional cost*	
Period	*Total*	*Annual change*	*Amount (US dollars)*	*Annual change (US dollars)*
1989–1990	109	—	95 956	—
1990–1991	110	+1 (+0.9%)	106 600	+10 644 (+11.1%)
1991–1992	172	+62 (+56.4%)	201 373	+94 773 (+88.9%)
1992–1993	143	-29 (-16.9%)	152 187	-49 186 (-24.4%)
1993–1994	96	-47 (32.9%)	97 060	-55 127 (-36.2%)
1994–1995	139	+43 (+44.8%)	128 203	+31 143 (+32.1%)
1995–1996	64	-75 (-54%)	75 070	-53 133 (-41.4%)
1996–1997	48	-16 (-25%)	54 303	-20 767 (-27.7%)
1997–1998	55	+7 (+14.6%)	81 837	+27 534 (+50.7%)

Table 2
Number and category of exceptions, 1996–1997 and 1997–1998

	1996-1997[a]			*1997-1998*[b]		
	Approved	*Declined*[c]	*UNDP*	*Approved*	*Declined*[d]	*UNDP*
First class						
Medical condition	0	1 (age)		1	2 (1 age; 1 unfit)	
Regular standard of accommodation not available	5	0		4	0	
Eminent person	2	0		0	1	
Donating services free of charge	6	2		3	0	
Arduous journey	1	0		0	0	
Security officer	11	0		13	0	
Deputy Secretary-General	0	0		3	0	
Subtotal	**25**	**3**		**24**	**3**	
Business class						
Medical condition	3	0	0	8	1 (age)	0
Regular standard of accommodation not available	4	0	1	6	0	5
Eminent person	12	4	4	9	15	6
Donating services free of charge	4	1	0	6	1	0
Arduous journey	0	0	0	2	0	2
Security officer	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	2	0
Subtotal	**23**[e]	**5**	**5**	**31**[f]	**19**	**13**
Total	**48**	**8**	**5**	**55**	**22**	**13**

[a] Of all requests received by the Under-Secretary-General for Management in 1996–1997, 15.7 per cent were declined.

[b] Of all requests received by the Under-Secretary-General for Management in 1997–1998, 34.4 per cent were declined.

[c] If security officer is not taken into account, 20 per cent were declined.

[d] If security officer and Deputy Secretary-General are not taken into account, 45.8 per cent were declined.

[e] Of the 23 exceptions for business-class travel made in 1996–1997, 5 were granted by UNDP under its delegated authority.

[f] Of the 31 exceptions for business-class travel made in 1997–1998, 13 were granted by UNDP under its delegated authority.